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OF  
THE LORD  
GEORGE DIGBY.

To the House of Commons,  
Concerning Bishops, and the  
*Citie Petition*, the 9<sup>th</sup>. of  
*Febr.* 1640.

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Printed for *Ibo. Walkley*;  
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 Feb. 1840.



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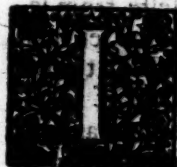
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**The Lord Digbys Speech to  
the House of Commons,**

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*Citie Petition the ninth  
of Febr. 1640.*

**Mr. SPEAKER,**



Know it is a tender subject I am  
to speake of, wherein I beleeve  
some within these wals are en-  
gaged with earnestnesse in con-  
trary opinions to mine; and  
therefore it will be necessary  
that in the first place I beseech the patience of  
this House, that they will bee pleased to heare  
mee without interruption, though somewhat  
I say should chance to bee displeasing. I hope  
there will bee somewhat from mee ere I con-  
clude, that may be of service to this House.

Sir, if I thought there were no further de-  
signe in the desires of some, that this *London*  
*Petition* should bee committed, then merely  
to make use of it, as an Index of grievance;  
I should winke at the faults of it, and not much  
oppose it.

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There is no man within these walls, more sensible of the heavy grievance of Church government, then my selfe, nor whose affections are keene to the clipping of those wings of the Prelates, whereby they have mounted to such insolencies, nor whose zeale is more ardent to the searing them, as that they may never spring againe.

But having reason to beleeve, that some tyme at a totall extirpation of Bishops, which is against my heart, and that the committing of this Petition, may give countenance to that designe, I cannot restraîne my selfe from labouring to divert it, or at least to set such notes upon it, as may make it ineffectual to that end.

Truly Sir, when this Petition was first brought into the House, I considered it in its nature, in the manner of the delivery in the present conjuncture of affaires, both Ecclesiasticall and civill, to be a thing of the highest consequent that any age hath presented to a Parliament, and the same thoughts I have of it still.

I professe, I looked upon it then with terror, as upon a Comet, a blasing starre, raised and kindled out of the stench, out of the poisonous exhalation of a corrupted Hierarchy: Me thought the Comet had a terrible tale with it, Sir, and pointed to the North, the same  
feares



feares dwell with mee still concerning it, I beseech God they may not prove Propheticall: I feare all the Prudence, all the Fore-cast, all the Vertue of this House, how unitedly soever collected, how vigorously applyed, will have a hard worke of it. Yet to hinder this meteor, from causing such distempers and combustions by its influence, as it then portended by its appearance, whatever the event be, I shall discharge my conscience concerning it freely, and uprightly, unbiassd by popularity, as by any Court respects. Sir, I could never flatter, the sense of this House, which I reverence so much, as to suppress a single no, that my heart dictated, though I knew the venting of it might cast prejudices upon mee, had my fortune plac't me neer a King; I could not have flattered a King. And I doe not intend now to flatter a multitude.

I shall desire those worthy Aldermen, and the rest here of the Citie of *London*, not to take any thing I shall say in the least way of his disparagement, or reflecting on the Citie; I looke not upon this Petition; as a Petition from the Citie of *London*; but from I know not what, 15000. Londoners; all that could bee got to subscribe.

When this Petition was first presented, there might be more reason for the Commitment of it, as being then the most comprehensive Catalogue wee had of Church grievance, but now that the Ministers by their remonstrance, have  
given

given us to faire, and full an Index of them without those mixtures of things contemptible, irrationall, and presumptuous, wherewith this Petition abounds, I doe not know I professe to what good end it can be committed, being full of contemptible things, but first let mee recall to your mind the manner of its delivery. And I am confident, there is no man of judgement, that will thinke it fit for a Parliament, under a Monarchy, to give countenance to irregular, and tumultuous assemblies of people, be it for never so good an end: Besides, there is no man of the least insight into nature, or History, but knows the danger, when either true or pretended simulation, of conscience, hath once given a multitude agitation.

Contemptible things (Sir) swarme in the 8. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. Articles of this Petition. Did ever any body thinke, that the gaites of *Quid*, or *Tom Cuyes* muse, should by 15000. have beene presented to a Parliament, as a motive for the extirpation of Bishops, the scandall of the Rochet, the Lawne sleeves, the foure corner Cap, the Cope, the Surplesse, the Tippet, the Hood, the Canonickall Coat, &c. may passe with arguments of the same weight, onely thus much let mee observe uppon it (*Master Speaker*) that one would sweare the Penners of the Article had the pluming of some Bishops already, they are acquainted with every feather of them. In a word, I know not whether bee more preposi-  
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rous to inferre the extirpation of Bishops from such weake Arguments, or to attribute as they doe to Church government all the civill grievance, not a patent, not a Monopolie, not the price of a commodity raysed, but these men make Bishops the cause of it.

For the irrationall part (Mr. *Speaker*) first they petition us in a Method onely allowable with those, whose judgement or justice is suspected, that is *Iniquum petere, ut equum ferar*; There is no Logicke, no reasoning in their demands: It were want of Logick in mee to expect it from a multitude, but I consider the multitude in this is led by implicate faith, to that which hath beene digested, and contrived but by a few, and in them truly I cannot but wonder at the want of Reconciliation here.

A Petition, Mr. *Speaker*, ought in this to be a kind of Silogisme, that the conclusion, the prayer ought to hold proportion with the premises, that is with the Allegations, and complaints, and to be reasonably deduc't from them.

But what have wee here a multitude of Allegations, a multitude of instances, of abuses, and depravations of Church government: And what inferred from thence, let the use be utterly abolisht for the abuses sake: As if they should say, that because Drunkennesse and Adultery are growne so epidemicall, as is alledged in the Petition, Let there bee no more use of Wine, nor of Women in the Land.

Christ

Christs discipline hath bin adulterated; 'tis true, the whole church inebriated by the Prelats, therefore inferre our Petitioners, let not so much as the chaste, the sober use of them be suffered.

Give mee leave to continue one of the comparisons a little further, should it be demonstrated unto us, that Wine could not bee made use of without drunkennesse, and withall some such liquor presented, as healthy, and as nourishing, from which no distemper could arise; I should not blame any man for desiring to pluck up the Vine by the roots. But for the moveable ill-fake, to take away the sollid good of a thing, is just as reasonable in this, as to root up a good tree, because there is a Canker in the branches.

For the bold part of this Petition, Sir, what can there be of greater presumption, then for Petitioners, not only to prescribe to a Parliament, what, and how it shall doe; but for a multitude to teach a Parliament, what, and what is not, the government according to Gods Word.

Besides, what is the Petition against is it not against the government of the Church of England established by Acts of Parliament? Is it not against the Liturgy, against the severall forms of divine service, ratified by the same authority?

Is true, Mr. *Speaker*, the Parliament may mend, may alter, may repeale Lawes, may make new, and I hope in due season we shall doe so in point of Church government: but in the meane time let me tell you, Sir, I cannot but esteeme it an irreverence, an high presumption in any

to petition point blank against a Law or Government in force.

Representment of inconvenience may be made, (as the Ministers have done) such as may endure the wisdom of a Parliament, to advise Lawes, to rectifie, to repeale them, but it imports the very essence of Parliaments, to keepe up the honour of its former Acts, and not to suffer them to be further blasted from abroad.

Believe me, Mr. *Speaker*, all the reverence and authority, which wee expect from future times to our owne Acts, hereafter depends upon our upholding the dignity of what former Parliaments have done, even in those things which in their due time wee may desire, and intend to reverse.

Mr. *Speaker*, you see in what plaine language I have set forth unto you the faults of this petition, notwithstanding as great as they are, so they may not obtaine any seeming countenance from us, I find my selfe willing to have them past by, especially when I consider how naturally prone all mankind is, when it finds it selfe oppressed beyond patience, to fly unto extreames for ease. And indeed, I doe not thinke, that any people hath beene ever more provoked, then the generality of *England*, of late years, by the insolencies and exorbitancies of the Prelates.

I protest sincerely, Mr. *Speaker*, I cannot cast mine eye upon this petition, nor my thoughts on the praefises of the Church-men, that have governed



governed it of late, but they appear'd to mee as a scourge employed by God upon us for the sinnes of the Nation, I cannot thinke of that passage in the Booke of *Kings*, Hee that escapes the sword of *Hazael*, shall *Jehu* slay, and he that escapes *Jehu*, shall *Elisha* slay.

Mee thinkes, the vengeance of the Prelates hath beene so laid, as if twere meant no generation, no Degree, no Complexion of Mankind should escape it.

Was there a man of a nice and tender conscience? him have they afflicted with scandall in *Adiaphoris*, imposing on him those things, as necessary, which hee thinkes unlawfull, and they themselves knew to be but indifferent.

Was there a man of a legall conscience, that made the establishments by Law, the measure of his Religion: him have they netled with innovations with fresh introductions to popery.

Was there a man of a meeke and humble spirit, him have they trampled to dirt in their pride.

Was there a man of a proud, and arrogant nature, him have they bereft with indignation at their superlative insolence about him.

Was there a man peaceably affected, studious of the quiet, and tranquillity of his countrey: their incendiariſhip hath plagued him.

Was there a man faithfully addicted to the Right of the Crowne, loyally affected to the Kings supremacy, how hath hee beene galled by their new *Oath*, a direct Covenant against in

Was



Was there a man tentatious of the liberty, and propriety of the subject, have they not set forth Bookes, or Sermons, or Canons destructive to them all.

Was there a man of a pretty sturdy conscience, that would not blanch for a little. Their pernicious Oath hath made him sensible, and wounded, or I feare prepared him for the Divell.

Was there a man that durst mutter against their Insolencies: he may inquire for his Luggs, they have beene within the Bishops visitation, as if they would not onely derive their Brandishment of the spirituall sword from S. *Paw*, but of the materiall one too, and the Right to cut off Eares.

Mr. *Speaker*, as dully, as faintly, as unlively, as in Language these Actions of the Prelates have beene exprest unto you, I am confident there is no man heares mee but is brimfull of Indignation.

For my part, I professe, I am so enflamed with the sense of them, that I finde my selfe ready to cry out with the lowdest of the 15000. downe with them, downe with them, even to the ground.

But Mr. *Speaker*, when I cast mine Eye round upon this great and wise assembly, and find my selfe a part too (though the most unworthy and Inconsiderable) of that Senate, from whose dispassionate and equall Constitutions, present and future times must expect their happinesse or Infelicity.

It obliges mee to the utmost of my power to divest my selfe and others of all those disturbances of Judgement which arise ever from great provocations, and to settle my thoughts in that temper which I thinke necessary to all those that would judge cleerely of such things as have incensed them.

I beseech you gentlemen let us not be led on by passion to popular and vulgar errors, it is naturall (as I told you before) to the multitude to fly unto Extremes, that sometimes ever the best to them, that is most opposite to the presentest object of their hate.

Wise Councells (Mr. *Speaker*) must square their resolutions by another measure, by what's most just, most honourable, most convenient. Believe mee, Sir, great alterations of Government are rarely accompanied with any of these.

Mr. *Speaker*, wee all agree upon this, that a Reformation of Church Government is most necessary, and our happy unity of opinions herein should bee one Argument untous to stay there, but Sir, to strike at the Roote, to attempt a totall alteration, before ever I can give my vote unto that, three things must bee made manifest unto mee. First, that the mischiefs which wee have felt under Episcopall government flow from the nature of the function, not from the abuses of it only, that is, that no Rules, no Bandages can be set to Bishops able to restrain them from such Exorbitances.

Secondly, such a frame of Government must be layd before us, as no time, no corruption can make lyable to proportionable inconveniences with that which wee abolish.

And thirdly, it must be made to appeare that this *Mixt* is practicable.

For the first, Sir, that Episcopacy a function deduced through all ages of Christs Church, from the Apostles times and continued by the most venerable and sacred order Ecclesiasticall; a function dignified by the learning and Piety of so many Fathers of the Church, glorified by so many Martyrdomes in the Primitive times, and some since our owne blessed Reformation, a government admired (I speake it knowingly) by the learnedst of the Reformed Churches abroad, and lastly a Government under which (till these late yeares) this Church hath so flourished, so fructified, that such a government, such a function, should at the sag end of 1640. yeares be found to have such a close Divell in it, as no power can Exercise, no Law restraine appeares (Sir) to mee a thing very improbable. I professe I am deceived Sir, if Trienniall Parliaments will not be a Circle able to keepe many a worse Divell in order.

For the second, I know not the strength of other mens fancies, but I will confesse unto you ingenuously the weakesse of my faith in the point, that I do not beleve there can any other government be proposed but will in time be

subject to as great or greater inconveniences then Episcopacy, I meane Episcopacy so ordered, reduced and limited as I suppose it may be by firme and solid boundaries.

It is true Sir, wee cannot so well judge before hand of future inconveniences, for the knowledge of the faults and mischiefs of Episcopall government resulting from fresh and bleeding Experience.

And the insight into dangers of any new way that shall bee proposed being to rise onely from speculation, the apprehension of the one is likely to bee much more operative then of the other, though perhaps in just reason it ought to bee the weaker with us, it is hard in such cases for us to preserve an equall and unpropense judgment; since being in things of this World so much too hard for faith and contemplation: yet as Divine as our inspection is into things not experimented, if we hearken to those that would quite extirpate Episcopacy, I am confident that instead of every Bishop wee put downe in a Diocese, wee shall set up a Pope in every Parish.

Lastly Mr. *Speaker*, whether the subversion of Episcopacy, and the introducing of another kind of Government bee practicable, I leave it to those to judge who have considered the connexion and interweaving of the Church government with the Common Law, to those who heard the Kings Speech to us the other Day, or who

who have looked into reason of state.

For my part (though no Statesman I will speake my mind freely in this) I doe not thinke a King can put downe Bishops totally with safety to Monarchy; not that there is any such Alliance as men talke of twixt the Myter and the Crowne, but from this reason, that upon the putting downe of Bishops, the Government of assemblies is likely to succeed it. That, to be effectually must draw to it selfe the supremacy of Ecclesiasticall Jurisdiction that (consequently) the power of excommunicating Kings as well as any other Brother in Christ; and if a King chance to bee delivered over to Sathan, Judge whether men are likely to care much what becomes of him next.

These things considered Mr. *Speaker*, let us lay aside all thoughts of such dangerous, such fundamentall, such unaccomplished Alterations; and all thought of countenancing those thoughts in others, let us all resolve upon that our severall, in (with union) we may probably promise our selves, successe, happines, and security, that is in a through Reformation.

To that, no mans vote shall bee guided with more zeale, with more heartines then mine. Let us not destroy Bishops, but make Bishops such as they were in the Primitive times.

Doe their large Territories, their large Revenues offend? let them be retrencht, the good Bishop of *Lippo* had but a narrow Diocesse.

*Doe*

**Doe** their Courts and subordinates offend? let them bee brought to governe, as in the primitive times, by Assemblies of their Clergie. **Doth** their intermeddling in secular affaires offend? exclude them from the capacity, it is no more then what reason and all Antiquity hath interdicted them.

**That** all this may bee the better effected, **Mr. Speaker** my motion is that First, we may appoint a Committee to collect all greivances springing from the mis-government of the Church (to which the Ministers head of Government will bee sufficient without countenancing this petition by a Comittment) and to: sepreseat it to this house in a Body.

And in the next place that we may (if it stand with the order of Parliaments.) desire that there may be a standing Committee of certaine members of both Houses who (with a number of such learned Ministers as the houses shal nominate for Assistants) may take into consideration all these greivances, and advise of the best way to settle peace and satisfaction in the Government of the Church, to the comfort of all good Christians and all good Commonwealths men.

**Doth** their large Territories offend? let them be reduced to a narrow Diocesse. **Doth** their large Revenues offend? let them be reduced to a narrow Diocesse. **Doth** their large Revenues offend? let them be reduced to a narrow Diocesse.

**Doe**



